



State of Vermont
Department of Human Resources
Office of the Commissioner
110 State Street, Drawer 20
Montpelier, VT 05620-3001
www.vermontpersonnel.org

[phone] 802-828-3491
[fax] 802-828-3409

Agency of Administration

December 7, 2006

Re: Notice of Security Concerns Regarding Your Social Security Number

To Whom it May Concern:

This week we discovered that a contractor, hired by the State of Vermont, inadvertently included social security numbers of some medical providers in a field that was meant to list only taxpayer identification numbers in documents associated with the bidding process for medical insurance administration. The numbers were not labeled as social security numbers, but rather as taxpayer identification numbers. For most providers, the number in the field was a taxpayer identification number, as intended. However, after a preliminary investigation, we believe that your name and social security number may have appeared on the list. I say "may have appeared on the list," because the task of identifying which numbers were social security numbers and which were not is difficult, and made more difficult by the fact that some numbers known to be social security numbers were associated with more than one provider. Apparently, some providers had used the social security number of someone with whom they practice. Although we do not want to unnecessarily alarm anyone, to be cautious we must send this notice to everyone whose number might have been on the list. The list was an attachment for a Request for Proposal (RFP) announcement that was available on the State of Vermont site that announces bid opportunities beginning on May 12, 2006, until it was removed on or about June 19, 2006. Despite the fact that the information was open to access, we have no evidence to date to indicate that your social security number was obtained by anyone intending to misuse it. However, prudence demands that we contact you.

Your name, and possibly social security number, appeared on the electronic document that was open to Internet access because you were a health care provider who had at least one bill for services submitted to CIGNA for payment to you or reimbursement to a client. The identities of providers who had furnished services to the state's plan participants were relevant to the process used to select the bidder for a new contract period. Having told you that your association with CIGNA is the link to this event, I must also tell you that CIGNA only provided the information to The Segal Group, the consultant who was hired to write and issue the RFP.

The attachment to the RFP with a list of providers who had been paid through CIGNA was

included because bids were to include analysis of the bidder's network compared to the providers used by plan participants. To allow bidders to do that, The Segal Group obtained from CIGNA a list of names in its claims system of providers who had billed for services, and along with the names were taxpayer identification numbers and ZIP codes. The numbers were included, consistent with what we understand to be the industry practice, in order to have a unique identifier that would lead to a valid network comparison. The problem with doing that was that some providers use their personal social security numbers as a taxpayer identification number.

We wish to be as transparent and open as possible concerning this event. We are informing you through this letter and will also publicly disclose most of the information contained in this letter to make sure all concerned are informed about this event. Given the sensitivity of the information there are some things we will not disclose to a more general audience, for example the name of the persons affected, their social security numbers, or more sophisticated and precise information about how one could have possibly retrieved this information after it was taken down from the state's web page. We have now taken all reasonable steps to cut off access to your information. We have also listed below some suggestions of how to protect yourself to avoid or reduce the harm that might come from misuse of your information. We also ask that you report immediately any suspicious activity. Additionally, we wish to assure you that every effort will be made to avoid a recurrence.

If you would like to contact us for more information or assistance, you may call us toll-free at 1-888-568-4547. We recommend that you monitor credit reports with the major credit reporting agencies. Those agencies and their contact information follow:

Equifax
1-800-685-1111
P.O. Box 740241
Atlanta, GA 30374-0241
www.equifax.com

Experian
1-888-397-3742
P.O. Box 2104
Allen, TX 75013
<http://qspace.iplace.com>

TransUnion
1-800-916-8800
P.O. Box 1000
Chester, PA 19022
www.transunion.com

Pursuant to Vermont law, you are entitled to a free copy of your credit report from those agencies every twelve months. Also, Vermont consumers may request via certified letter to the credit reporting agencies a "security freeze" be placed on their credit report for a \$10.00 fee. A security freeze would prevent release of information about your report without your express authorization. That would give rise to some minor inconvenience and perhaps delay when you wish to obtain credit, but would provide extra protection against someone obtaining credit in your name without your knowledge. Helpful information about fighting identity theft is available on the Vermont Attorney General's website at <http://www.atg.state.vt.us>, where you may also find directions on how to get free credit reports. Another helpful source is the Federal Trade Commission website, which you may find at www.consumer.gov/idtheft. If you need any other assistance in obtaining a credit report or monitoring your credit report please do not hesitate to give us a call at the toll-free number.

We have sent a letter to the contractor expressing our deep dissatisfaction and anger with this event. Follow-up notices to you will be issued if any helpful information is discovered. We are committed to helping you minimize the threat to your interests, and to doing everything possible to avoid similar errors in the future.

Sincerely,



Linda P. McIntire
Commissioner